

DANCE IN REVIEW

*Jennifer Dunning***Green Woodland Sprites,
Perhaps From the 18th Century***Dance as Ever*
ArcLight Theater

Leigh Witchel came to ballet late, in his college years. And the recent dances he presented Sunday afternoon at the ArcLight Theater were the work of a still-passionate convert, for better and for worse.

Mr. Witchel's love for the pure classical canon, which his immaculately trained dancers obviously share, was seen to best advantage in "Green." Set to mellifluous music by Franz Berwald, a little-known 19th-century composer, "Green" appears to pay homage to the tableaux and divertissements typical of late 18th-century ballet, some of it created in Berwald's home city, Stockholm.

The four dancers look like saucy woodland sprites in David Quinn's sparkling green costumes. The performers — Mary Carpenter, Abraham Miha, Christina Paolucci and Parise Sellitti — know their ballet manners and give every choreographic detail full, clear value. "Green" radiates a loving, knowledgeable fan's appreciation of style.

The program's two other premieres are less imaginative. "Duet," set to Rameau, is numbingly academic. Mr. Witchel links classroom steps and careful juxtapositions for Mr. Miha and Ryan Kelly, a guest dancer from City Ballet who is a promising choreographer but too ripe a performer for this small stage.

"Midare," a solo set to koto music composed by Yatsunami Kengyo and performed live by Masayo Ishigure, is a waste of Peter Boal, the City Ballet guest who danced it. Mr. Witchel may have intended to evoke the still center that is the heart of Mr. Boal's movement style and of some Japanese traditional dance. Instead, "Midare" juggles classroom steps and sequences with slow muscle-rippling arm gestures.

The ingeniously atmospheric lighting was by Jeffrey E. Salzberg.